

APPLICATION NO. 09/826,277
DOCKET NO. N8753

Prior Art Rejection

Claims 1, 3, 5-10, 12 and 14-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Woods (US 2002/0160250). However, it is believed that Woods does not in fact anticipate the invention of the rejected claims, and that this rejection should be withdrawn.

The Woods application discusses impregnating flexible graphite with a curable sealant and ancillary aspects thereof. The invention of the rejected claims is quite different, particularly relating to the relationship between material density, voids, and morphology. The Woods' application involves morphology developed by embossing or calendering. In the specification and claims of the cited application, embossed articles have their morphology influenced solely by the embossing process. The claims of the above-captioned application, contrariwise, involve articles that have their morphology influenced by the process and starting resin-impregnated material.

For articles with varying cross-sectional thickness, those prepared according to the Woods methods do not exhibit constant density, where density is based on resin/sealant and graphite components. In the material of the rejected claims, including the material produced by the method of the rejected claims, the density is uniform even under conditions with varying cross-sectional thickness. This difference is not insignificant; intermediate and end-use properties are highly influenced by density and density gradients. For example, coefficient of expansion (both thermal and moisture-induced) is a very strong function of local resin/sealant